

From Carlos

## Defensive tips

These tips just showed up in my inbox, so I thought I'd share. Something to include in your visualizations. Everyone visualizes for a few hours a day, right?

Seriously though, seemed like an OK list. I like the Gapping and Body Position tips. The list mentions defensemen specifically, but it would really apply to anyone when you're on the defensive side of the puck, I think. Of course, for me knowing what I should do is only part of the problem. ;)

### 1 v 1 Defensive Tips:

The ability of defensemen to play 1v1 situations effectively is a staple of winning hockey. If your defensemen are beaten in this situation, even-numbered attacks quickly become odd-numbered attacks, and the results are usually not good. There are really only two ways that an opponent can beat a defenseman in a 1v1 situation. An attacker might skate around the defenseman using outside speed or simply put the puck into the defenseman's personal space and slide right through. Proper execution of the following principles and tactics form the guide for teaching this part of the game.

#### Gapping:

The gap is the space between the puck carrier and the defensemen. An ideal gap is approximately two stick lengths. Defensemen must begin gapping as soon as it is clear the opponent will gain possession of the puck. Defensemen should be backing up at approximately the same speed at which the attackers are moving forward. Improper speed will mean either the gap will grow too wide or the opponent will blow past the defensemen to the free space behind. Ideally, the defensemen should be able to force the puck carrier to make a decision.

#### Body Position:

The defensemen should try to establish a position more toward the middle of the ice, lining up their outside shoulder with the inside shoulder of the attacker. This helps keep the attacker to the outside and away from the middle of the ice.

#### Stick Position:

Defensemen must have their sticks directly in front of their body at all times, usually at arm's length. When combined with proper body position, this stick position encourages the attacking forward to keep to the outside. It also keeps the attacker outside the defenseman's personal space. If an attacker is allowed to get too close to a defensemen on the initial attack, it is easier for the attacker to win the one-on-one battle. A common mistake made by beginning defensemen is having the stick to the side of their body instead of directly in front.

#### Foot Position:

The defensemen must try to skate backward with their feet never more than shoulder-width apart. Having the feet too far apart makes it difficult to pivot from backward to forward and skate with an attacker that tries to skate wide with speed. Whenever possible, the defensemen should avoid using crossover steps to move laterally. If an attacker catches a defensemen in the middle of a crossover step going one way while the attacker is moving in the other direction, the result is the attacker walking in alone on the net.

#### Eyes:

The defenseman's eyes should be focused on the chest of the opposing puck carrier. If a defender looks at the puck or at the head of the opponent, chances are greater that they will be outplayed with fakes. By looking at the chest of the puck carrier, the defenseman can still see the puck and use the stick to poke check.

#### Poke Checking:

The defensemen should attempt to poke check the puck while keeping their body in proper alignment and position. That way, if the poke check is missed, the body is still in position to make contact with the attacker. A common mistake made by beginner defenders is to lunge with their entire body when poke checking. If the poke check fails to dislodge the puck from the attacker's possession, the defenseman will be unable to turn and continue pursuing the puck carrier.